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ABSTRACT

In order to assess the competence of library users at Bergen Community College (Paramus, New Jersey), a survey of the student body was conducted which revealed that more than half of the students used the library as a resource center and that approximately 64 percent of students had been exposed to a library orientation program in their English classes. Despite this finding, librarians continued to observe that students were deficient in research skills. It was recommended that an innovative course in library orientation and research skills be developed and experimentally administered. (EMH)

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FORMAT FOR LIBRARY INSTRUCTION - STATED STUDENT PREFERENCES AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Final Paper

Presented to

Dr. Claire Barrett

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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by

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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM

Students at Bergen Community College are deficient in the use of basic library tools. This is apparent to every Media Utilization Advisor (reference librarian) who serves at the reference desk in the Library and Learning Resources Center. Incoming freshmen lack the necessary skills, and the college program for teaching them is not effective enough.

In both the transfer and career curriculums, students are required to write research papers. A wealth of information, both print and non-print is available, but it is poorly used because the students lack library competence. Although help is available and is freely and cheerfully given, it is important that students be able to follow through on their own, after they have received advice and instruction from the reference librarian. In addition, they cannot bring the friendly, helpful reference librarian with them when they leave college for jobs or other educational institutions. It is essential that every student minimally be able to use the card catalog, the Wilson periodical indexes, and the New York Times Index.

At the present time library instruction is given by the faculty of the Library and Learning Resources Center upon request. About 50% of the teachers of English Composition I request "library orientation" for their classes. Some English teachers give their own library instruction. The library faculty also provides specialized library lessons for advanced

courses and other disciplines, when invited.

This system is not producing the desired results. The problems are:

1) Not all students are exposed to "library orientation".
2) The library orientations vary greatly.
3) When lectures are requested for advanced or specialized courses, there is no standardized base upon which to build.
4) Most students do not recall the content of the library orientations well enough to function in the Library and Learning Resources Center.

Although the problems could probably be ameliorated administratively, and with the use of learning activities packages, a useful change must take cognizance of student opinions and attitudes.

The purpose of this study is to investigate stated student preferences for a format for library skills instruction. To better interpret these preferences, it is necessary to identify certain characteristics of the students responding.

SUBORDINATE PROBLEMS

Subordinate Problem 1

To develop and administer an instrument to survey student opinion on the preferred format for library skills instruction

Subordinate Problem 2

To assess the homogeneity of the student body. For the purposes of this study should the following groups be considered together or be differentiated?

1) part-time students

2) full-time students

3) evening session students

4) day session students

Subordinate Problem 3

To determine whether student responses evidence a meaningful conincidence among the following four characteristics:

1) high self-evaluation of ability to use the library

2) high importance given to improving ability to use the library

3) good actual research skills as demonstrated by behavior in the library

4) exposure to a library orientation

DELIMITATIONS

This study is limited to the full-time and part-time students at Bergen Community College who were in the Library and Learning Resources Center on December 17, 18, 19 and 21, 1974 and completed the Survey of Student Opinion Regarding Instruction in the Use of the Library.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

AV - Any non-print source of information available in the Library and Learning Resources Center

Ability - Skill in using the library

Library and Learning Resources Center - Library

Library Orientation - Special class session in the use of the Library

Media Utilization Advisor - Reference librarian who deals with print and non-print source of information. Usually specializes in a particular subject area.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Director of Institutional Research has been consulted, and has served as advisor to the investigator. Both the Chairman of the Library and Learning Resources Department and the Dean of Instruction at Bergen Community College consider this study an important step in the ongoing effort to improve library skills instruction at the College. They have indicated that the results will be given serious consideration.

Chapter 2

RELATED LITERATURE

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION IN LIBRARY SKILLS

Kuo[1] investigating the effectiveness of six methods of library instruction at Portland State University in Oregon found that all treatments significantly improved performances on a criterion test. The most effective method was individual preparation by the students by the audio-tutorial method followed by a fifty minute follow-up session led by a librarian.

> Students receiving the audio-tutorial instruction (Group AV) achieved significantly higher scores than did students receiving the slide/audiotape instruction (Group S). One possible explanation may be that since the slides were uniformly externally paced students did not have adequate time to pay attention to the details of the illustrations. Students in the self-study group were able to set their own learning pace, to review the parts where they experienced difficulty, and had sufficient time to absorb additional information.[2]

Carey[3], working in Britian prepared a tape-chart library course for use in secondary schools and colleges. The course or teaching package, designed to minimize the time used by the teacher or librarian, consisisted of twelve tape recorded talks and the machinery to play them in a classroom,

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[1]Frank F. Kuo, "A Comparison of Six Versions of Science Library Instruction," College and Research Libraries, xxxiv (July, 1973), pp.287-90.

[2]Kuo, p.289.

[3]Robert Carey, "Handling Information, a Tape/Chart Library Course, An Aid for Teachers and Librarians," Education Libraries Bulletin, XLVI (September, 1973), pp.12-15.

transparencies to illustrate the talks, printed charts containing the transparency information, sample documents, and a handbook for the instructor. The materials were used in four ways:

1) in place of a live lecture to a class using tapes and transparencies
2) as a teaching aid for an individual or a small group, using the tapes and the charts
3) as an aid to a librarian or teacher preparing a live lecture
4) as part of a discussion or instruction in some wider subject context

The course was tested in 1971 in some Hertforshire Secondary Schools. It was found most successful as a teaching aid for individuals and least successful as a substitute for a live lecture to a large group.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

At Bergen Community College, there is a tradition of student involvement in administrative and instructional policy making. Two voting student representatives serve on every standing committee of the college and also on the faculty senate. These representatives are encouraged to participate actively, and their opinions are respectfully sought by the members of the faculty who also serve. In response to student requests, the grading system, the attendance requirements and the final examination policies were studied and modified. This is in line with today's predominant trend in both secondary and higher education.

Education is for students and the student voice is an important component. However, a trend toward a louder student voice and more involve-

ment should not be interpretated as a trend toward faculty abdication. Marquis discussing the student role in curriculum development at Presque Isle High School in Maine says:

> Student involvement is not a handout. It is a shared experience....
>
> ...The entire function of curriculum development can be compared to a matching game.... It deals with the casting of special combinations which establish the best possible learning atmosphere for pupils. The ingredients for these learning atmospheres are students and their learning styles, teachers and their teaching styles, curriculum content, materials and resources. The basic premise of this presentation is that students should be heavily involved in the casting of these combinations.[4]

Layton Olsen, with a background of participation in the National Student Lobby and experience as a legal council to community organizations considers students consumers of higher education. They are both a market force seeking new processes of learning, and a constituency with institutions accountable to them. Students are people with a point of view, not vessels to be filled appropriately.[5]

There are some noteworthy counter indications. Halsabeck reviewing the literature on collegiate decision making says:

> Since it is one thing to adopt a program and another to make it work, one must look at implementation of programs, i.e., goal attainment, as another criterion of an effectiveness system. Victor Thompson, (1965) in writing on complex organizations, argues that high participation is more conducive to successful implementation of innovation than less participation. He further suggests, however, that the relationship is curvilinear, i.e., either extreme, monarchy or mass democracy, may be counter-productive for implementation.[6]

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[4]Romeo Marquis, "Curriculum Development: Can Students Be Involved?" Education Digest, xxxix (November, 1973), pp.57-59.

[5]Layton Olsen, "Should Higher Education Be Consumer Controlled?" Liberal Education LX Supplement (March, 1974), pp.187-97

[6]Robert E. Helsabeck, "Toward An Optimum Decision-Making Structure in Colleges: A Literature Review and Interpretation," Journal of Research and Development VI No. 6 (February, 1972), p.7.

He maintains, however:

> ...certain "production" decisions such as curricular decisions, standards of acceptable student work and manner of teaching should be left to the faculty (where the expertise is greatest) and the plotting of one's movement through the curriculum should be left to the individual student, because the students' interest are most at stake. (Advice should be made available, nevertheless).[7]

At the University of Oklahoma a study of instructional program revision identifies forty-three change factors. Although "Needs and opinions expressed by students",[8] is one of the factors, Bailey quotes from the study:

> It was apparent that change factors which can be identified with the democratic process and involve faculty participation are most likely to affect program revisions. The faculty did indicate that students do not and should not participate formally in the revision of instructional programs. This might suggest that contemporary pressure for student involvement has not been present thus far on campus nor has the faculty perceived student involvement as a current need.[9]

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[7]Helsabeck, p.12.

[8]Robert Leslie Bailey, "Factors in Modifying Instructional Programs," Improving College and University Teaching xxi, no. 3 (Summer, 1973), p.207.

[9]Bailey, p.211.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURE

The problem, the rationale of the investigation and the possible benefits to Bergen Community College were discussed with the following Bergen Community College officials:

Dr. Sarah Katherine Thomson, Chairman of the Library and Learning Resources Department

Dr. George Charen, Dean of Instruction

Dr. S. Charles Irace, Vice-President

Ms. Virginia Loughlin, Dean of Students

Dr. Irvin Hochman, Director of Institutional Research

Vice-President Irace, the Deans and Dr. Thomson gave permission for a study which would involve querying student library patrons at the college. Dr. Hochman agreed to act as consultant. He helped the investigator prepare both a questionnaire, Survey of Student Opinion Regarding Instruction in the Use of the Library, and a program to be used by the college data processing department in analyzing the replies. The questionnaire is Appendix A of this report. The printout from the data processing department is Appendix B.

The questionnaire was designed to measure the stated preferences of Bergen Community College student library patrons, with respect to format for library skills instruction. It was also intended to yield a profile of these students, highlightling library activities, skills and attitudes.

To secure a random sample of student library patrons, the questionnaires were distributed by the investigator and other media utilization advisors to people in the Library on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday during the week beginning December 15, 1974. The distribution took place at two hour intervals between 8:25 a.m. and 8:25 p.m. weekdays and between 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday. Before any questionnaires were handed out, the investigator allocated the maximum number to be distributed at each time. The allocation was based on an earlier observation of the library use pattern.

Each patron was personally approached. He was asked to help the library faculty by completing the survey and placing his response in the receptacles provided at each exit. He was thanked for h's cooperation. Participation was voluntary. Students were not pressured in any way. The questionnaires were not collected individually.

Approximately 700 questionnaires were distributed. 592 valid responses were received. Replies from all people who were not presently enrolled students at Bergen Community College were considered invalid, and were not counted.

In the detailed analysis of the responses, the investigator disregarded:

1) Responses from two students who attend classes on Saturdays only. This was considered statistically unrepresentative of the Saturday only student body, and the percentage of them who usually use the library.

2) Failure to answer a given question. For each question, approximately 1% of the respondents did not reply. These omissions are reflected in percentage totals which do not add up to 100%.

In the discussion which follows, percentages are rounded to the nearest percent. The tables are correct to the nearest tenth of a percent.

When meaningful differences are discussed, they must be assumed to be significant. Although absolute measures of statistical significance were not applied, Dr. Hochman considered the sample and the differences sufficiently large to assume statistical significance.

Chapter 4

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An analysis of the 592 responses reveals an interesting picture of the Bergen Community College students who patronize the college library. Table 1, Bergen Community College Student Library Patrons - Composite Portrait, on pages 13-14 summarizes the results.

About three-quarters are full-time students.

Approximately 80% usually attend classes during the day.

Of the almost 25% who are part-time students, only 60% attend at night; 38% are day students.

Most students list their prime purpose for coming to the library as either "to study" (35%), or "to do research" (29%).

Other reasons in order of frequency are:

to read (8%)

to borrow or return books or AV material (8%)

to use AV (6%)

to be with or meet people (5%)

7% wrote in other reasons including:

to tutor or be tutored

to use typewriters or copying machines

to sleep

to think

to enjoy the atmosphere

Table 1

Bergen Community College Student
Patrons - Composite Portrait
(In Percentages)

	Total Student Patrons	Full Time	Part Time	Day	Evening
Total Patrons	100.0 (592 people)	100.0 (441 people)	100.0 (146 people)	100.0 (417 people)	100.0 (111 people)
Day Session	80.0	94.5	38.3	-	-
Evening Session	17.7	4.9	60.2	-	-
Full-time	74.4	-	-	87.9	19.8
Part-time	24.6	-	-	11.8	79.2
Had Library Class	63.8	67.8	54.1	66.6	54.9
Chief Reason for Coming					
Research	28.8	28.1	30.8	28.0	31.5
Study	35.1	36.5	31.5	34.8	38.7
Read	8.2	7.4	10.9	8.8	6.3
Borrow or return books or AV	7.6	6.3	10.9	7.8	7.2
Use AV	6.2	6.3	5.4	5.9	7.2
Meet or Be with people	5.2	5.8	3.4	6.1	1.8
Other	7.6	7.9	4.7	7.1	5.4
Library Activity					
Consulted Reference Librarian	21.2	20.8	22.6	21.3	21.6
Used Card Catalog	26.5	24.9	30.8	26.1	27.0
Used Periodical Index	18.0	18.1	17.8	18.7	15.3

Table 1 (continued)

	Total Student Patrons	Full Time	Part Time	Day	Evening
Ability to use the library (Self-rating)					
Excellent	19.0	19.5	18.4	19.6	17.1
Good	49.1	50.5	45.2	49.3	47.7
Fair	26.1	25.1	29.4	26.1	27.9
Poor	4.2	3.8	5.4	4.0	4.5
Importance of Improving Ability					
Very Important	31.7	29.9	37.6	30.3	37.8
Moderately Important	37.1	38.7	32.8	38.3	34.2
Slightly Important	20.4	21.0	18.4	20.8	18.0
Not Important	8.4	8.6	7.5	8.2	8.1
Preferred Mode for Library Instruction					
Required 1 Credit	5.0	2.0	12.3	2.5	14.4
Elective 1 Credit	13.0	12.6	13.0	13.2	11.7
Required No Credit	8.1	6.5	13.0	7.3	11.7
Part of English	50.8	52.8	45.2	52.1	47.7
No Opinion	13.1	13.6	12.3	13.5	11.7
Other Suggestions	8.2	10.2	2.7	9.9	1.8

Although certain patterns emerge for all student library users, in some instances it is important to single out patrons who are either part-time or evening students. Their responses do not run counter to the trends, but some important differences are evident.

For all categories of students the prime reasons for coming to the library fall in the same order. However, compared to the total, a larger porportion of evening students came to study (39%), or to do research (32%), or to use AV (7%). Less than 2% of the evening students came to the library to be with or meet people.

Part-time students as a group are slightly different too. Compared to the total, a smaller percentage came to study (32%). A larger percentage came to do research (31%) and to read (11%). About 3% came to be with or meet people.

With reference to library skills, students were asked for a self-evaluation. Most students (68%) considered their skills "excellent" or "good". However, approximately the same percentage (69%) considered it "very important" or "moderately important" to improve their library skills. Only 4% rated their skills "poor". Full-time students as a group and day session students as a group gave themselves slightly higher ability ratings than part-time students or evening students.

Although 64% of all students surveyed had a class session in the use of the library, only 54% of the part-time students and 60% of the evening students had the class.

SELF-ESTIMATE OF ABILITY

Table 2, Selected Responses in Percentages, Analyzed by Self-Estimate of Ability is on page 16. For discussion purposes, to avoid

Table 2. Selected Responses in Percentages, Analyzed by

Self-Estimate of Ability	Full-time	Part-time	Day	Evening	Had Library Class	Importan	
						Very	Mode
Excellent	76.1	23.8	83.3	16.8	62.8	44.2	28
Good	76.6	22.6	80.4	18.2	70.7	28.1	40
Fair	71.6	27.7	80.0	20.0	56.7	31.6	36
Poor	68.0	32.0	76.0	20.0	40.0	24.0	44

s, Analyzed by Self-Estimate of Ability

Importance of Improving Skill				Preferred Mode for Library Instruction				
Very	Moderate	Slight	Not At All	1 Credit Course Required	Elective	No Credit Required	Part of English	Other
44.2	28.3	7.0	14.1	4.4	14.1	8.3	51.3	9.7
28.1	40.5	23.0	7.5	5.4	12.0	7.9	50.5	8.5
31.6	36.7	25.8	5.8	4.5	13.5	8.3	52.9	7.0
24.0	44.0	20.0	12.0	8.0	12.0	8.0	48.0	8.0

undue emphasis on extremes, the top two ability categories are combined, and the bottom two ability categories are combined. 72% of all students who considered their ability to use the library "excellent" or "good", rated improving this skill "very important". However, only 56% of the students who considered their ability "fair" or "poor" rated improving this skill "very important".

Consideration of both poles on the self-estimate scale may provide further illumination with reference to attitude. Of those who rated themselves "excellent" in library skills, 21% considered improving either "slightly important" or "not at all important". Of those who rated their skills "poor", 32%, almost one-third, considered improving "slightly important" or "not at all important".

There is a noteworthy coincidence between high self-estimate of ability and exposure to a class in library instruction. Between 63% and 71% of the students who rated their skills "excellent" or "good" had a special class session on the use of the library. Of those who considered their skills "fair" or "poor" only 40% to 57% had a library instruction session.

ACTUAL LIBRARY SKILLS

Actual skill in using a library, as distinguished from a self-estimate of skill is evidenced by what a person does in a library. Usually, a student who comes to the college library "to do research" should engage in one or more of the following activities:

consult the reference librarian

use the card catalog

use the Readers Guide or other periodical index

Table 3, Selected Responses of Students who Came to the Library To Do Research, on page 19, analyzes the activities and attitudes of the 171 surveyed students who stated that their chief purpose in coming to the library was to do research. It compares some of their responses as a group with those of the total respondents.

Although 71% of these students considered their library skills "excellent" or "good", less than half, followed one or more of the acceptable procedures. 4% rated their skills "poor", but between 51% and 58% evidenced poor skills. Despite their high self-ratings, a sizable proportion of these students who came to do research, were dissatisfied with their skill. 71% considered it "very important" or "moderately important" to improve their ability to use the library.

All these indications of deficiencies in library skills are evident, despite the fact that 65% of the students who came to do research had been exposed to a special class session on using the library.

PREFERRED MODE FOR LIBRARY INSTRUCTION

The respondents were asked to indicate the mode they preferred for library instruction and were offered these options:

required one credit course

elective one credit course

short series of required classes with no credit or grade

part of regular English courses

no opinion at this time

some other method

Table 3

Selected Responses (In Percentages) of Students
Who Came To The Library To Do Research

		Reason For Coming - Research	Total Respondents
Had Special Class In Use of Library		64.9	63.8
Consulted Reference Librarian		42.1	21.2
Used Card Catalog		49.1	26.5
Used Periodical Indexes		41.5	18.0
Self-Rating	- Excellent	19.2	19.0
	Good	51.4	49.1
	Fair	25.7	26.1
	Poor	3.5	4.2
Need to Improve	- Very Important	38.0	31.7
	Moderately Important	38.0	37.1
	Slightly Important	14.0	20.4
	Not Important	8.1	8.4
Mode of Instruction Preferred	- Required 1 Credit	2.9	5.0
	Elective 1 Credit	17.5	13.0
	Required No Credit	8.7	8.1
	Part of English	49.1	50.8
	Other	9.3	8.2

Table 1, Bergen Community College Student Library Patrons - Composite Portrait, page 13, shows student responses for the total number surveyed and for full-time, part-time day session and evening session students. 51% of all student respondents preferred library instruction as part of regular English courses. For each category of student this was the most popular single choice. Every other category was preferred by less than 15% of the total number surveyed.

However, only 45% of the part-time students and 48% of the evening students selected this "part of regular English courses" option. Stated differently, 55% of the part-time students, and 52% of the evening students either had no opinion or preferred instruction in some other mode. These are the groups which placed the highest priority on improving library skills, and the groups which had the least exposure to special classes in library instruction. Table 4, Student Library Patrons Preferences and Attitudes, page 22, is extrapolated from Table 1. It highlights these group differences.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Most student patrons of the Bergen Community College library are full-time students attending during the day. Approximately half of the patrons come to use the library as a resource center. The rest use it as a place. Approximately 64% have had a special class session in the use of the library. For roughly half of the students, library instruction as part of the regular English courses is the preferred mode. Most have a high regard for their own library skills, but this high self-estimate is not justified by performance.

Table 4

Student Library Patrons - Preference and Attitudes (In Percentages)

	Preferred Instruction As Part of English Courses	Preferred Any Mode Except Part of English (Includes No Opinion)	Exposed To Class In Library Instruction	Considered Need to Improve "Very Important"
All Respondents	50.8	49.2	63.8	31.7
Full-time Students	52.8	47.2	67.8	29.9
Part-time Students	45.2	54.8	54.1	37.6
Day Session Students	51.2	47.9	66.6	30.3
Evening Session Students	47.7	52.3	54.9	37.8

Compared with the day session or full-time student, the evening student or part-time student emerges as--

more serious about academic pursuits

less confident of his ability to use the library

attaching more importance to this skill in using the library

less apt to have had a formal class in the use of the library

less enthusiastic for library instruction as part of regular English courses

more enthusiastic for a separate course in the use of the library, either required or elective, with or without credit.

There is a meaningful coincidence, but no proven causal relationship among these factors:

high self-estimate of ability to use the library

exposure to a special class session on using the library

high priority given to the importance of improving library skills

There is less coincidence between each of these factors and ability to use the library, as determined by performance.

The investigator recommends the initiation of two kinds of changes in the library instruction program.

In line with the students' expressed preferences, the major thrust of library instruction should continue to be part of the English composition courses. However, within this format, a program which will produce competent library users, should be developed, tested and then administered uniformly. Innovative approaches should be tried experimentally.

In addition, an elective one credit course, or a mini course should be developed and tested. This should be open to all students, but designed especially to accommodate those part-time or evening students for whom

improvement has a special urgency. It would be particularly appropriate for those students who do not have English Composition as a first semester course.

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APPENDIX

December 1974

BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER

SURVEY OF STUDENT OPINION REGARDING
INSTRUCTION IN USE OF THE LIBRARY

Bergen Community College is searching for ways to improve instruction. Please help by completing this short questionnaire and leaving it in the boxes placed at each exit.

1. What is your Bergen Community College student status?

(a-7) 0___Full-time
1___Part-time

2. When do you usually attend classes?

(a-8) 0___Day
1___Evening
2___Saturday Only

3. What was your chief reason for coming to the library today? (Check one of the following)

(a-9) 0___To borrow or return books or A-V materials
1___To read library books or magazines, etc.
2___To use A-V materials
3___To do research
4___To study
5___To be with or meet people
6___Other (Please explain)_____

_____

Today, did you: (Check all below that apply)

4. (a-10) 0___Consult the reference librarian?

5. (a-11) 0___Use the card catalog?

6. (a-12) 0___Use the Readers Guide or other periodical index?

7. Please rate your ability to use the Bergen Community College Library.

(a-13) 0___Excellent
1___Good
2___Fair
3___Poor

8. As part of any Bergen Community Course, have you ever had a special class session on the use of the Library?

(a-14) 0___Yes
1___No
2___Not sure

9. How important is it for you to improve your ability to use the Bergen Community College Library

(a-15) 0___Very important
1___Moderately important
2___Slightly important
3 Not at all important

10. In your opinion, how should the College offer instruction in the use of the Library? Check one of the following?

(a-16) 0___Required one credit course
1___Elective one credit course
2___Short series of required classes with no credit or grade
3___Part of regular English courses
4___No opinion at this time
5___Some other method

If you checked "Some other method," please explain. Your suggestions are important.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION IT IS MOST APPRECIATED.

/sc